

Proposed City Budget Public Hearing  
May 27, 2015

Mayor Grenier opened the duly scheduled and advertised public hearing in the City Hall Auditorium at approximately 6:30 p.m. Present were Councilors Remillard, Otis, Morgan Allain, Rozek, Higbee, Nelson and Theberge. Councilor Gentili was absent. Also present: City Manager James Wheeler, Police Chief Morency, Deputy Police Chief Valerino, Fire Chief Randall Trull, Fire Department personnel, Corinne Cascadden, Bryan Lamirande, School Board Members, City Department Heads, Outside Agencies, citizens and the press.

Mayor Grenier announced that NH Business Magazine nominated Berlin for Best of NH for a City on the rise. The Mayor recognized 3 special people who work hard for the City: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme and Housing Coordinator Linda White. Living here, we don't see changes but we are seen in a different light by others who remember what we were like ten years ago and they are astonished by the progress we have made. The elected officials take no credit but credit is due to the folks who work day-to-day for the City.

Mayor Grenier explained the budget here tonight is a working document and only a proposal. This proposed budget was voted on by Council two weeks ago with no support to pass it as presented since they still had seven weeks away from appropriations and surpluses not spent. Revenues were higher than anticipated and those will come into play when the final budget is passed on June 15 per the City Charter directives. Tonight they will work off this budget proposal for the public. The Mayor will go over each individual account and ask if anyone has questions then at the end of the public hearing, the public will get the opportunity to tell Council about how they feel.

Mayor Grenier declared the public hearing now opened. Budget line items as follows:

01-401 M&CC:

Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, asked why the increase. Mayor Grenier explained the increase is in fees from Vachon & Cluckay for the mandatory annual audit. The City Manager stated there were also additional costs for the actuary analysis for the retirement system.

01-402 Administration: No comments

01-403 Elections: No comments

01-404 CH&OB: No comments

01-405 Special Funds: No comments

01-406 Property/Liability Insurance: No comments

01-408 Central Services: No comments

01-409 Discounts/Abatements: Discontinued per Auditor directive. No comments

01-410 Personnel Benefits: No comments

01-411 Contingency: Unappropriated money used for special community events. No comments

01-412 Outside Agencies: No comments

01-413 Cemetery: No comments

01-416 IT: No comments

01-420 Police Department: No comments

01-421 Fire Department: No comments

01-422 Street Lighting: No comments

01-423 Ambulance Service: No comments

01-424 Special Public Safety: No comments

01-425 Housing Coordinator: No comments

01-430 Public Works: Mayor Grenier noted that the significant increase was due to moving the Engineering line item into the Public Works line item.

Gary Peters, 15 Arthur Street, asked again, for the fourth year in a row, if they are ever going to change the windows at the Public Works Garage to save on energy costs.

01-431 Engineering: Discontinued. This line item moved to Public Works Department line item.

01-436 Solid Waste: No comments

01-440 Health Department: The department provides nursing services in the community and is a Medicaid revenue stream. This department self-funds itself. No comments.

01-441 Welfare: No comments

01-449 Parks: Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, asked why parks needs more money. Mayor Grenier explained that they need to cut grass on Rt 110 and mow the park on the corner of Granite Street. They also need to provide maintenance for the new facility on Gilbert Street for the Police Department. This is a state-of-the-art storage and office facility. There was an open house today with the BHS Building/Trades Program who built the building.

01-450 Recreation: Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, asked about this being separate from parks. It was explained that since they were two different functions, it was better to separate the departments.

01-451 Library: No comments

01-470 Debt Services: No comments

01-489 Capital Improvement: Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, asked if the amount was for road repair. The Mayor replied it is for road and sidewalk repair.

John Leveille, 399 First Avenue, noticed the appropriation for a new ladder truck was gone. Mayor Grenier said that since the Chief was seeking a grant for engine 4, no money was allocated. The City Manager added that it was a tough decision and he asked the Chief if the engine could service us for another year due to an inability to fund it. We are however funding a utility truck.

01-460 School: Mayor Grenier noted members of the School Board were present. No comments

01-461 School Cap Imp: No comments

01-407 County Tax: No comments

01-414 Transfer out: The City Manager explained the money goes out from the Airport and Sewer Funds. The funds are now deposited directly to sewer fund eliminating the need for that account.

Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, is not in favor of this budget because the amount is too high for senior taxpayers in Berlin who don't have money for taxes. This resembles a Sears Catalogue wish list expecting Mom and Dad to come up with money. It's time to turn the budget back to the Mayor and Council. On his job, he hears where businesses are not doing what they hoped to do. Berlin cannot be sustained on a recreational point of destination and Jericho Park. Council needs to help the taxpayers who put Council into office.

The Mayor asked the public if anyone had general comments from the budget just presented.

Mayor Grenier read into the record the following other City funds:

10-483 School Education Grants

Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue asked if the grants were for a specific reason above the \$18 Million Dollar operating budget. School Superintendent Cascadden said it is over and above the operating budget. The grant is for professional development and mental help. Federal grants can only supplement a school budget but cannot replace it.

11-464 School Food Services: No comments

21-400 BIDPA: No comments

60-432 Sewer Fund: The sewer fund is supported by sewer user revenues. No comments

63-437 Cates Hill: No comments

65-434 Berlin Airport Fund: Offset by the sale of fuel and land leases on buildings. No comments

Total City Budget – all funds: \$38,228,789.00.

Rodney Bengston, 329 Hillside Avenue, wants the breakdown of City property taxes expected to be raised. The Mayor replied on the city side \$7,436,508; school side \$5,555,388; County Tax \$1,892,241 roughly \$14 Million Dollars. This is the proposed amount for a tax increase of \$1.62 but there are a lot of other sources of revenues to be raised to offset this amount.

Mr. Bengston asked what happens if not enough came in. According to Mayor Grenier the City collects 98-99% and missed five–six thousand over the last three years. The DRA says Berlin does well. Berlin took twenty parcels for tax deeding. Mr. Bengston asked if the band-aid strip down Main Street is in the plan for this year. No, the Mayor said Rte. 16 is the major project.

Mayor Grenier thanked all for coming tonight and asked the public to recognize the City Council who meets over 20 times during budget time for \$700 per year. People don't thank them when they are out in public but there are many complaints. This is a dedicated bunch working for the betterment of the community and Berlin is starting to turn the corner. Council is cognizant of citizen finances and recognize their ability to pay. Council is tough on Department Heads when they come to Council requesting to spend City money, they must justify every penny spent. The Mayor gave hats off to this Council who help to make the City Manager's job easier.

There being no further comments or questions on the floor, Mayor Grenier declared the proposed budget public hearing closed at approximately 7:21P.M.

A TRUE RECORD, ATTEST:

Debra A. Patrick, CMC  
City Clerk